

Deron Drumm  
Simsbury, Connecticut

Judiciary Committee  
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**H.B. 5531 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS  
WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and respective members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Deron Drumm and I am the Executive Director of Advocacy Unlimited – an organization run by and for people who have experienced extreme emotional distress and/or addiction. I am here to testify in opposition to HB 5531.

I find it confusing that this bill has been brought forward. There have been multiple forums around the state on the opioid epidemic in Connecticut. We are being told that there is an epidemic going on while we are, simultaneously, being told that funding for addiction treatment needs to be cut because of Connecticut's financial situation. Why is a bill being proposed, with a hefty price tag, that DMHAS and the recovery community have consistently opposed? If we have money for this bill then why are other needed services being cut?

I have several points I could make about why forced treatment is a terrible idea. I am going to focus on the fact that forcing strong drugs into people is the antithesis of providing care. Over the last three years, I have focused much of my attention on learning about the ways people heal. I am weeks from completing a master's degree in integrative health. I am passionate about this subject for personal and professional reasons. On the personal side – I struggled with my emotional health since I was a small child. I spent years receiving treatment from the medical model – treatment that did not bring me relief. I ended up seeking relief from my emotional struggles in casinos and bars. I went down a dark road of addiction that ended with my hurting everyone in my life. In the process, I suffered two strokes and heart disease that led to my needing open-heart surgery. Today, thanks to a holistic approach to healing and recovery, I am married to my best friend, I help raise two amazing kids, I found my purpose in the work that I do at Advocacy Unlimited, I have low blood pressure and cholesterol and I have not needed to fill a prescription for any pharmaceutical in years. On the professional side – I see first hand how many people are hurting and how the mechanistic and reductionist medical model is not working. People in distress need support, hope and choice - they need to be in control of their own recovery journey. Too often this is not what they are receiving. I plan on spending my life advocating for better ways of supporting people in their times of need.

I am fortunate that one of my teachers in school is the mind-body medicine pioneer Dr. Bernie Siegel. When Bernie was a practicing doctor he would encourage his